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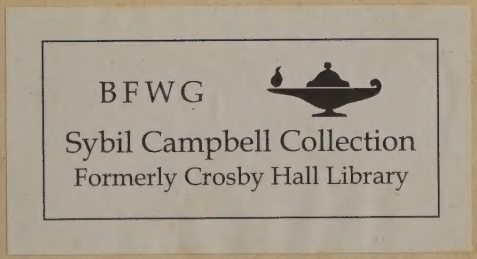

SWORDS AND PLOUGHSHARES

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

POETRY—

POEMS OF MEN AND HOURS. 1911
COPHETUA. A PLAY IN ONE ACT. 1911
POEMS OF LOVE AND EARTH. 1912
CROMWELL, AND OTHER POEMS. 1913
REBELLION. A PLAY IN THREE ACTS. 1914
THE STORM. A PLAY IN ONE ACT. 1915
THE GOD OF QUIET. A PLAY IN ONE ACT. 1916
OLTON POOLS. 1916

PROSE—

WILLIAM MORRIS. A CRITICAL STUDY. 1912
SWINBURNE. AN ESTIMATE. 1913
THE LYRIC. 1915

Swords and Ploughshares

by John Drinkwater.

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TO

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Swords and Ploughshares

THE CARVER IN STONE

He was a man with wide and patient eyes,
Grey, like the drift of twitch-fires blown in June,
That, without fearing, searched if any wrong
Might threaten from your heart. Grey eyes he had
Under a brow was drawn because he knew
So many seasons to so many pass
Of upright service, loyal, unabased
Before the world seducing, and so, barren
Of good words praising and thought that mated his.
He carved in stone. Out of his quiet life
He watched as any faithful seaman charged
With tidings of the myriad faring sea,
And thoughts and premonitions through his mind
Sailing as ships from strange and storied lands
His hungry spirit held, till all they were
Found living witness in the chiselled stone.
Slowly out of the dark confusion, spread
By life's innumerable venturings

Over his brain, he would triumph into the light
Of one clear mood, unblemished of the blind
Legions of errant thought that cried about
His rapt seclusion : as a pearl unsoiled,
Nay, rather washed to lonelier chastity,
In gritty mud. And then would come a bird,
A flower, or the wind moving upon a flower,
A beast at pasture, or a clustered fruit,
A peasant face as were the saints of old,
The leer of custom, or the bow of the moon
Swung in miraculous poise—some stray from the world
Of things created by the eternal mind
In joy articulate. And his perfect mood
Would dwell about the token of God's mood,
Until in bird or flower or moving wind
Or flock or shepherd or the troops of heaven
It sprang in one fierce moment of desire
To visible form.
Then would his chisel work among the stone,
Persuading it of petal or of limb
Or starry curve, till risen anew there sang
Shape out of chaos, and again the vision
Of one mind single from the world was pressed
Upon the daily custom of the sky
Or field or the body of man.

His people
Had many gods for worship. The tiger-god,
The owl, the dewlapped bull, the running pard,
The camel and the lizard of the slime,

The ram with quivering fleece and fluted horn,
The crested eagle and the doming bat
Were sacred. And the king and his high priests
Decreed a temple, wide on columns huge,
Should top the cornlands to the sky's far line.
They bade the carvers carve along the walls
Images of their gods, each one to carve
As he desired, his choice to name his god. . . .
And many came ; and he among them, glad
Of three leagues' travel through the singing air
Of dawn among the boughs yet bare of green,
The eager flight of the spring leading his blood
Into swift lofty channels of the air,
Proud as an eagle riding to the sun. . . .
An eagle, clean of pinion—there's his choice.

Daylong they worked under the growing roof,
One at his leopard, one the staring ram,
And he winning his eagle from the stone,
Until each man had carved one image out,
Arow beyond the portal of the house.
They stood arow, the company of gods,
Camel and bat, lizard and bull and ram,
The pard and owl, dead figures on the wall,
Figures of habit driven on the stone
By chisels governed by no heat of the brain
But drudges of hands that moved by easy rule.
Proudly recorded mood was none, no thought
Plucked from the dark battalions of the mind
And throned in everlasting sight. But one
God of them all was witness of belief

And large adventure dared. His eagle spread
Wide pinions on a cloudless ground of heaven,
Glad with the heart's high courage of that dawn
Moving upon the ploughlands newly sown,
Dead stone the rest. He looked, and knew
it so.

Then came the king with priests and counsellors
And many chosen of the people, wise
With words weary of custom, and eyes askew
That watched their neighbour face for any news
Of the best way of judgment, till, each sure
None would determine with authority,
All spoke in prudent praise. One liked the owl
Because an owl blinked on the beam of his barn.
One, hoarse with crying gospels in the street,
Praised most the ram, because the common folk
Wore breeches made of ram's wool. One
declared
The tiger pleased him best,—the man who
carved
The tiger-god was halt out of the womb—
A man to praise, being so pitiful.
And one, whose eyes dwelt in a distant void,
With spell and omen pat upon his lips,
And a purse for any crystal prophet ripe,
A zealot of the mist, gazed at the bull—
A lean ill-shapen bull of meagre lines
That scarce the steel had graved upon the
stone—
Saying that here was very mystery

And truth, did men but know. And one there was
Who praised his eagle, but remembering
The lither pinion of the swift, the curve
That liked him better of the mirrored swan.
And they who carved the tiger-god and ram,
The camel and the pard, the owl and bull,
And lizard, listened greedily, and made
Humble denial of their worthiness,
And when the king his royal judgment gave
That all had fashioned well, and bade that each
Re-shape his chosen god along the walls
Till all the temple boasted of their skill,
They bowed themselves in token that as this
Never had carvers been so fortunate.

Only the man with wide and patient eyes
Made no denial, neither bowed his head.
Already while they spoke his thought had gone
Far from his eagle, leaving it for a sign
Loyally wrought of one deep breath of life,
And played about the image of a toad
That crawled among his ivy leaves. A queer
Puff-bellied toad, with eyes that always stared
Sidelong at heaven and saw no heaven there,
Weak-hammed, and with a throttle somehow twisted
Beyond full wholesome draughts of air, and skin
Of wrinkled lips, the only zest or will
The little flashing tongue searching the leaves.
And king and priest, chosen and counsellor,

Babbling out of their thin and jealous brains,
Seemed strangely one ; a queer enormous toad
Panting under giant leaves of dark,
Sunk in the loins, peering into the day.
Their judgment wry he counted not for wrong
More than the fabled poison of the toad
Striking at simple wits; how should their thought
Or word in praise or blame come near the peace
That shone in seasonable hours above
The patience of his spirit's husbandry ?
They foolish and not seeing, how should he
Spend anger there or fear—great ceremonies
Equal for none save great antagonists ?
The grave indifference of his heart before them
Was moved by laughter innocent of hate,
Chastising clean of spite, that moulded them
Into the antic likeness of his toad
Bidding for laughter underneath the leaves.

He bowed not, nor disputed, but he saw
Those ill-created joyless gods, and loathed,
And saw them creeping, creeping round the walls,
Death breeding death, wile witnessing to wile,
And sickened at the dull iniquity
Should be rewarded, and for ever breathe
Contagion on the folk gathered in prayer.
His truth should not be doomed to march among
This falsehood to the ages. He was called,
And he must labour there ; if so the king
Would grant it, where the pillars bore the roof

A galleried way of meditation nursed
Secluded time, with wall of ready stone
In panels for the carver set between
The windows—there his chisel should be set,—
It was his plea. And the king spoke of him,
Scorning, as one lack-fettle, among all these
Eager to take the riches of renown;
One fearful of the light or knowing nothing
Of light's dimension, a witling who would throw
Honour aside and praise spoken aloud
All men of heart should covet. Let him go
Grubbing out of the sight of these who knew
The worth of substance; there was his proper
trade.

A squat and curious toad indeed. . . . The eyes,
Patient and grey, were dumb as were the lips,
That, fixed and governed, hoarded from them all
The larger laughter lifting in his heart.
Straightway about his gallery he moved,
Measured the windows and the virgin stone,
Till all was weighed and patterned in his brain.
Then first where most the shadow struck the wall,
Under the sills, and centre of the base,
From floor to sill out of the stone was wooed
Memorial folly, as from the chisel leapt
His chastening laughter searching priest and
king—
A huge and wrinkled toad, with legs asplay,
And belly loaded, leering with great eyes
Busily fixed upon the void.

All days
His chisel was the first to ring across
The temple's quiet ; and at fall of dusk
Passing among the carvers homeward, they
Would speak of him as mad, or weak against
The challenge of the world, and let him go
Lonely, as was his will, under the night
Of stars or cloud or summer's folded sun,
Through crop and wood and pastureland to sleep.
None took the narrow stair as wondering
How did his chisel prosper in the stone,
Unvisited his labour and forgot.
And times when he would lean out of his height
And watch the gods growing along the walls,
The row of carvers in their linen coats
Took in his vision a virtue that alone
Carving they had not nor the thing they carved.
Knowing the health that flowed about his close
Imagining, the daily quiet won
From process of his clean and supple craft,
Those carvers there, far on the floor below,
Would haply be transfigured in his thought
Into a gallant company of men
Glad of the strict and loyal reckoning
That proved in the just presence of the brain
Each chisel-stroke. How surely would he prosper
In pleasant talk at easy hours with men
So fashioned if it might be—and his eyes
Would pass again to those dead gods that grew
In spreading evil round the temple walls ;

And, one dead pressure made, the carvers moved
Along the wall to mould and mould again
The self-same god, their chisels on the stone
Tapping in dull precision as before,
And he would turn, back to his lonely truth.

He carved apace. And first his people's gods,
About the toad, out of their sterile time,
Under his hand thrilled and were recreate.
The bull, the pard, the camel and the ram,
Tiger and owl and bat—all were the signs
Visibly made body on the stone
Of sightless thought adventuring the host
That is mere spirit; these the bloom achieved
By secret labour in the flowing wood
Of rain and air and wind and continent sun. . . .
His tiger, lithe, immobile in the stone,
A swift destruction for a moment leashed,
Sprang crying from the jealous stealth of men
Opposed in cunning watch, with engines hid
Of torment and calamitous desire.
His leopard, swift on lean and paltry limbs,
Was fear in flight before accusing faith.
His bull, with eyes that often in the dusk
Would lift from the sweet meadow grass to watch
Him homeward passing, bore on massy beam
The burden of the patient of the earth.
His camel bore the burden of the damned,
Being gaunt, with eyes aslant along the nose.
He had a friend, who hammered bronze and iron

And cupped the moonstone on a silver ring,
One constant like himself, would come at night
Or bid him as a guest, when they would make
Their poets touch a starrier height, or search
Together with unparsimonious mind
The crowded harbours of mortality.
And there were jests, wholesome as harvest ale
Of homely habit, bred of hearts that dared
Judgment of laughter under the eternal eye:
This frolic wisdom was his carven owl.
His ram was lordship on the lonely hills,
Alert and fleet, content only to know
The wind mightily pouring on his fleece,
With yesterday and all unrisen suns
Poorer than disinherited ghosts. His bat
Was ancient envy made a mockery,
Cowering below the newer eagle carved
Above the arches with wide pinion spread,
His faith's dominion of that happy dawn.

And so he wrought the gods upon the wall,
Living and crying out of his desire,
Out of his patient incorruptible thought,
Wrought them in joy was wages to his faith.
And other than the gods he made. The stalks
Of bluebells heavy with the news of spring,
The vine loaded with plenty of the year,
And swallows, merely tenderness of thought
Bidding the stone to small and fragile flight;
Leaves, the thin relics of autumnal boughs,
Or massed in June. . . .

All from their native pressure bloomed and sprang
Under his shaping hand into a proud
And governed image of the central man,—
Their moulding, charts of all his travelling.
And all were deftly ordered, duly set
Between the windows, underneath the sills,
And roofward, as a motion rightly planned,
Till on the wall, out of the sullen stone,
A glory blazed, his vision manifest,
His wonder captive. And he was content.

And when the builders and the carvers knew
Their labour done, and high the temple stood
Over the cornlands, king and counsellor
And priest and chosen of the people came
Among a ceremonial multitude
To dedication. And, below the thrones
Where king and archpriest ruled above the throng,
Highest among the ranked artificers
The carvers stood. And when, the temple vowed
To holy use, tribute and choral praise
Given as was ordained, the king looked down
Upon the gathered folk, and bade them see
The comely gods fashioned about the walls,
And keep in honour men whose precious skill
Could so adorn the sessions of their worship,
Gravely the carvers bowed them to the ground.

Only the man with wide and patient eyes
Stood not among them ; nor did any come
To count his labour, where he watched alone
Above the coloured throng. He heard, and looked
Again upon his work, and knew it good,
Smiled on his toad, passed down the stair unseen
And sang across the teeming meadows home.

A TOWN WINDOW

Beyond my window in the night
Is but a drab inglorious street,
Yet there the frost and clean starlight
As over Warwick woods are sweet.

Under the grey drift of the town
The crocus works among the mould
As eagerly as those that crown
The Warwick spring in flame and gold.

And when the tramway down the hill
Across the cobbles moans and rings,
There is about my window-sill
The tumult of a thousand wings.

THE NEW MIRACLE

Of old men wrought strange gods for mystery,
  Implored miraculous tokens in the skies,
And lips that most were strange in prophecy
  Were most accounted wise.

The hearthstone's commerce between mate and
    mate,
  Barren of wonder, prospered in content,
And still the hunger of their thought was great
  For sweet astonishment.

And so they built them altars of retreat
  Where life's familiar use was overthrown,
And left the shining world about their feet,
  To travel worlds unknown.

. . . . . .

We hunger still. But wonder has come down
  From alien skies upon the midst of us;
The sparkling hedgerow and the clamorous town
  Have grown miraculous.

And man from his far travelling returns
  To find yet stranger wisdom than he sought,
Where in the habit of his threshold burns
  Unfathomable thought.

MEMORY

One told me in the stress of days
  Of ease that memory should bring,
And so I feared my trodden ways
  For snares against my labouring.

Lest I should spend my brain amiss
  In wrath for bitterness gone by,
Or amorous for some old kiss,
  I would not deal with memory.

Because one said—"In memory
  Is half the health of your estate,"
I smote the dead years under me,
  I smote and cast them from my gate.

THE BOUNDARIES

ALTHOUGH beyond the track of unseen stars
Imagination strove in weariless might,
Yet loomed at last inviolable bars
That bound my farthest flight.

And when some plain old carol in the street
Quickened a shining angel in my brain,
I knew that even his passionate wings should beat
Upon those bars in vain.

And then I asked if God omnipotent
Himself was caught within the snare, or free,
And would the bars at his command relent,—
And none could answer me.

LAST CONFESSIONAL

For all ill words that I have spoken,
For all clear moods that I have broken,
For all despite and hasty breath,
Forgive me, Love, forgive me, Death.

Death, master of the great assize,
Love, falling now to memories,
You two alone I need to prove,
Forgive me, Death, forgive me, Love.

For every tenderness undone,
For pride when holiness was none
But only easy charity,
O Death, be pardoner to me.

For stubborn thought that would not make
Measure of love's thought for love's sake,
But kept a sullen difference,
Take, Love, this laggard penitence.

For cloudy words too vainly spent
To prosper but in argument,
When truth stood lonely at the gate,
On your compassion, Death, I wait.

For all the beauty that escaped
This foolish brain, unsung, unshaped,
  For wonder that was slow to move,
  Forgive me, Death, forgive me, Love.

For love that kept a secret cruse,
For life defeated of its dues,
  This latest word of all my breath—
  Forgive me, Love, forgive me, Death.

FOR CORIN TO-DAY

Old shepherd in your wattle cote,
I think a thousand years are done
Since first you took your pipe of oat
And piped against the risen sun,
Until his burning lips of gold
Sucked up the drifting scarves of dew
And bade you count your flocks from fold
And set your hurdle stakes anew.

And then as now at noon you'ld take
The shadow of delightful trees,
And with good hands of labour break
Your barley bread with dairy cheese,
And with some lusty shepherd mate
Would wind a simple argument,
And bear at night beyond your gate
A loaded wallet of content.

O Corin of the grizzled eye,
A thousand years upon your down
You've seen the ploughing teams go by
Above the bells of Avon's town;
And while there's any wind to blow
Through frozen February nights,
About your lambing pens will go
The glimmer of your lanthorn lights.

MAD TOM TATTERMAN

" Old man, grey man, good man scavenger,
Bearing is it eighty years upon your crumpled back ?
What is it you gather in the frosty weather,
Is there any treasure here to carry in your sack ? "

. . . . . .

" I've a million acres and a thousand head of cattle,
And a foaming river where the silver salmon leap ;
But I've left fat valleys to dig in sullen alleys
Just because a twisted star rode by me in my sleep.

" I've a brain is dancing to an old forgotten music
Heard when all the world was just a crazy flight of dreams,
And don't you know I scatter in the dirt along the gutter
Seeds that little ladies nursed by Babylonian streams ?

" Mad Tom Tatterman, that is how they call me.
Oh, they know so much, so much, all so neatly dressed ;

I've a tale to tell you—come and listen, will
you ?—
One as ragged as the twigs that make a mag-
pie's nest.

" Ragged, oh, but very wise. You and this and
that man,
All of you are making things that none of you
would lack,
And so your eyes grow dusty, and so your limbs
grow rusty—
But mad Tom Tatterman puts nothing in his
sack.

" Nothing in my sack, sirs, but the Sea of Galilee
Was walked for mad Tom Tatterman, and
when I go to sleep
They'll know that I have driven through the
acres of broad heaven
Flocks are whiter than the flocks that all your
shepherds keep."

MAMBLE

I NEVER went to Mamble
That lies above the Teme,
So I wonder who's in Mamble,
And whether people seem
Who breed and brew along there
As lazy as the name,
And whether any song there
Sets alehouse wits aflame.

The finger-post says Mamble,
And that is all I know
Of the narrow road to Mamble,
And should I turn and go
To that place of lazy token
That lies above the Teme,
There might be a Mamble broken
That was lissom in a dream.

So leave the road to Mamble
And take another road
To as good a place as Mamble
Be it lazy as a toad;
Who travels Worcester county
Takes any place that comes
When April tosses bounty
To the cherries and the plums.

LOVE'S CHALLENGE

When days are words, and all is done,
And we together lie alone
In our last city, and the sun
Can no more serve us than a stone—

If then the riches that are signed
In shapes of perishable earth
Should know denial, and the mind
That counted them be nothing worth,

If love that orders patiently
Upon the lover's brain the one
True stature of the loved should be
Less than the dust when all is done,

Should love be forfeit, but a sound
Of days outlasted by a rhyme,—
Then would eternity be found
Apostate in the court of time.

THE POET TO HIS MISTRESS

If I should take
Less thought of gentleness
For your dear sake
Than for the poignant labours that possess
My blood, then surely by so much were signed
My shame and loss in the world's recording mind.

If you should be
Jealous of my desire,
And, loving me,
Rebuke my patient hopes from your sweet fire,
Then would you take a lover to your bed
Abased with the pale submission of the dead.

LOVE'S HOUSE

I

I KNOW not how these men or those may take
  Their first glad measure of love's character,
Or whether one should let the summer make
  Love's festival, and one the falling year.

I only know that in my prime of days
  When my young branches came to blossoming,
You were the sign that loosed my lips in praise,
  You were the zeal that governed all my spring.

II

In prudent counsel many gathered near,
  Forewarning us of deft and secret snares
That are love's use. We heard them as we hear
  The ticking of a clock upon the stairs.

The troops of reason, careful to persuade,
  Blackened love's name, but love was more
    than these,
For we had wills to venture unafraid
  The trouble of unnavigable seas.

III

Their word was but a barren seed that lies
  Undrawn of the sun's health and undesired,
Because the habit of their hearts was wise,
  Because the wisdom of their tongues was tired.

For in the smother of contentious pride,
  And in the fear of each tumultuous mood,
Our love has kept serenely fortified
  And unusurped one stedfast solitude.

IV

Dark words, and hasty humours of the blood
  Have come to us and made no longer stay
Than footprints of a bird upon the mud
  That in an hour the tide will take away.

But not March weather over ploughlands blown,
  Nor cresses green upon their gravel bed,
Are beautiful with the clean rigour grown
  Of quiet thought our love has piloted.

V

I sit before the hearths of many men,
  When speech goes gladly, eager to withhold
No word at all, yet when I pass again
  The last of words is captive and untold.

We talk together in love's house, and there
  No thought but seeks what counsel you may
    give,
And every secret trouble from its lair
  Comes to your hand, no longer fugitive.

VI

I woo the world, with burning will to be
  Delighted in all fortune it may find,
And still the strident dogs of jealousy
  Go mocking down the tunnels of my mind.

Only for you my contemplation goes
  Clean as a god's, undarkened of pretence,
Most happy when your garner overflows,
  Achieving in your prosperous diligence.

VII

When from the dusty corners of my brain
Comes limping some ungainly word or deed,
I know not if my dearest friend's disdain
Be durable or brief, spent husk or seed.

But your rebuke and that poor fault of mine
Go straitly outcast, and we close the door,
And I, no promise asking and no sign,
Stand blameless in love's presence as before.

VIII

A beggar in the ditch, I stand and call
My questions out upon the queer parade
Of folk that hurry by, and one and all
Go down the road with never answer made.

I do not question love. I am a lord
High at love's table, and the vigilant king,
Unquestioned, from the hubbub at the board
Leans down to me and tells me everything.

OF GREATHAM

(TO THOSE WHO LIVE THERE)

SPENDTHRIFT of ease, importunate of will,
  Daily we bid at learning's mart, and speak
In speech that is but vanity, for still
  We know not what we seek.

. . . . . .

For peace, than knowledge more desirable
  Into your Sussex quietness I came,
When summer's green and gold and azure fell
  Over the world in flame.

And peace upon your pasture-lands I found,
  Where grazing flocks drift on continually,
As little clouds that travel with no sound
  Across a windless sky.

Out of your oaks the birds call to their mates
  That brood among the pines, where hidden
    deep
From curious eyes a world's adventure waits
  In columned choirs of sleep.

Under the calm ascension of the night
  We heard the mellow lapsing and return
Of night-owls purring in their groundling flight
  Through lanes of darkling fern.

Unbroken peace when all the stars were drawn
Back to their lairs of light, and ranked along
From shire to shire the downs out of the dawn
Were risen in golden song.

. . . . . .

I sing of peace who have known the large unrest
Of men bewildered in their travelling,
And I have known the bridal earth unblest
By the brigades of spring.

I have known that loss. And now the broken thought
Of nations marketing in death I know,
The very winds to threnodies are wrought
That on your downlands blow.

I sing of peace. Was it but yesterday
I came among your roses and your corn?
Then momently amid this wrath I pray
For yesterday reborn.

WE WILLED IT NOT

We willed it not. We have not lived in hate,
Loving too well the shires of England thrown
From sea to sea to covet your estate
Or wish one flight of fortune from your throne.

We had grown proud because the nations stood
Hoping together against the calumny
That, tortured of its old barbarian blood,
Barbarian still the heart of man should be.

Builders there are who name you overlord,
Building with us the citadels of light,
Who hold as we this chartered sin abhorred,
And cry you risen Cæsar of the Night.

Beethoven speaks with Milton on this day,
And Shakespeare's song with Goethe's beats the sky,
In witness of the birthright you betray,
In witness of the vision you deny.

We love the hearth, the quiet hills, the song,
The friendly gossip come from every land,
And very peace were now a nameless wrong,—
You thrust this bitter quarrel to our hand.

For this your pride the tragic armies go,
And the grim navies watch along the seas;
You trade in death, you mock at life, you throw
To God the tumult of your blasphemies.

You rob us of our love-right. It is said.
In treason to the world you are enthroned;
We rise, and, by the yet ungathered dead,
Not lightly shall the treason be atoned.

THE CAUSE

When drum and brass make summons in the street
And death holds mighty conclave at our gate,
How girt against the summons do we meet—
How clean of heart—how holy in estate?

Knowing, we have not builded as we knew,
Loving, the price of love we have withheld,
The works in witness of our faith are few,
Upon our lips the forthright word is quelled.

We have heard the voice that spake upon the Mount
Unwearied of the generations dead,
And in a watch have been content to count
The loaves and leave the word unharvested.

The dust is on our swords, and in our brain
Sad ruinous gospels daily intercede;
We dream as angels, and the world again
Calls, and the dream goes barren of its deed.

Yet though we have been slow in sacrifice,
In service weak, in purpose unannealed,
Of all our treason still we know the price,
We know the beauty that we have not sealed.

And now, because the apostate captains call,
A guiltless people takes the pledge of guilt,
Swearing that in oblivion shall fall
The altars that our tattered hearts have built.

These lords, brute-blind in sodden passion, wrong
The promise of a world's regenerate name;
Our prophecy has faltered in a song—
They boast in shameless prophecy of shame.

Wherefore in arms we stand. O Spirit, thou
Leading our battle terribly shalt ride.
Our faith was halt, our little faith, but now
It is thy witness, and unterrified.

We dare the final agony, to set
The world's will free for far adventuring.
Now, when the unholy hosts of death are met,
Life's challenge to the hosts of death we fling.

ENGLAND TO BELGIUM

Not lusting for a brief renown
  Nor apt in any vain dispute
You throw the scythes of autumn down,
  And leave your dues of autumn fruit
Unharvested, and dare the wrong
  Of death's immitigable wing,
And on your banners burn a song
  That gods unrisen yet shall sing.

Because your Belgian fields are dear,
  And now they suffer black despite,
Because your womanhood can hear
  The menace on the lips of night,
Because you are a little clan
  Of brothers, and because there comes
The thief among you, to a man
  You take the challenge of your drums.

Not all our tears and wrath shall weigh
  The utter bitterness that falls,
O Belgian hearts, on you this day,
  The sorrow of your broken walls,
And desolated hearths, the crime
  Of Prussian sword and Prussian flame,
But, brothers, with the world we chime
  The story of your Belgian name.

We will be comrades at your side,
  Your battle and our battle one
To turn again this monstrous pride
  That veils but does not know the sun;
Our blood and thews with yours are set
  Against this creed of bar and goad,
The Ironside is in us yet
  As when the ranks of Cromwell rode.

For all things clean, for all things brave,
  For peace, for spiritual light,
To keep love's body whole, to save
  The hills of intellectual sight,
Girt at your Belgian gate we stand,
  Our trampled faith undaunted still,
With heart unseared and iron hand
  And old indomitable will.

REBUKE

In soaring stone they prophesied,
And figured with a brush of gold
Such peace as bids at eventide
The happy shepherd from the fold.

The stones are dust, the missal-page
No more shall make its coloured song. . . .
They were the souls of men; the gage
Is at your feet; you did them wrong.

It shall be answered. Yet they lie
Broken for ever with the sweet
Dear bodies crushed dispiteously
As acorns under swinish feet.

Though there be judgment, and the word
Be strait and bitter on your head,
Your work is done, your gospel heard,
You have your dead . . . you have your dead.

Yet, fools and little, still the clear
Undaunted hearts of Europe go
Gallant in faith . . . how should they fear?
You know them not. How should you know?

GATHERING SONG

A WORD for you of the Prussian boast,
Or never a word, but under the drum
The limber tread of a tramping host
Out of the English counties come—
There are men who could count you the
Warwick spires,
And fishermen turning from Severn and Ouse;
They gather from half a hundred shires,
And never a man of them all to choose.

They are coming out of the northern dales,
Out of the sound of Bow they come,
Lomond calls to the hills of Wales—
Hear them tramping under the drum:
From Derry to Cork, from Thames to Dee,
With Kentish Hob and Collier Tyne,
They come to travel the Dover sea,
A thousand thousand men of the line.

They come from the bright Canadian snows,
And Brisbane's one with proud Bengal;
Over the Vaal and the Orange goes
To the cape of the south a single call;
Though the term shall be for a year or ten
You still shall hear it under the drum,
The limber tread of the marching men:
They come, you lords of the boast, they come.

His wage of rest at nightfall still
He takes, who sixty years has known
Of ploughing over Cotsall hill
And keeping trim the Cotsall stone.

He meditates the dusk, and sees
Folds of his wonted shepherdings
And lands of stubble and tall trees
Becoming insubstantial things.

And does he see on Cotsall hill—
Thrown even to the central shire—
The funnelled shapes forbidding still
The stranger from his cottage fire ?

ON THE PICTURE OF A PRIVATE SOLDIER WHO HAD GAINED A VICTORIA CROSS

No daemon in that face; he stands
  Strangely as one of men that build,
In multitudes, with servile hands,
  The temples that they have not willed.

Yet once he smote the prison walls,
  And strode the hills of chance again,
And scattered to their burials
  The prudent devils of his brain.

The old monotonies may keep
  Anew the sessions of their power . . .
His heart shall carry down to sleep
  The spoils of an eternal hour.

ONE SPEAKS IN GERMANY

"I BID you build a tower,"
The king said to me,
"Where I can watch the passing
Of ships at sea."
And I built the king a tall tower.

And the king grew cunning,
And covetous was he
Of any ship was passing
Over the sea;
A sorry heart, and cunning.

I stand in the shadow
Of the king's tall tower,
And a heavy wind is nursing
An evil hour.
I am standing in the shadow.

OF THE DEAD

MASTER and Maker, God of Right,
The soldier dead are at Thy gate,
Whose challenge cried against the night,
Whose laughter dared the slings of hate.

We do not praise, nor shall be spent
This day in lamentation loud,
But of this warrior testament
We are proud, O Lord, nor vainly proud.

For Thee their pilgrim swords were tried,
Thy flaming word was in their scrips,
They battled, they endured, they died
To make a new apocalpyse.

Master and Maker, God of Right,
The soldier dead are at Thy gate,
Who kept the spears of honour bright
And freedom's house inviolate.

ECLIPSE

A MAN is dead . . . another dead . . .
  God! can you count the companies
Of stars across dear heaven spread?
  They are numbered even as these.

Blind brain of the world! And is the day
  Moving about its Christmas bells?
Poor spinning brain, and wellaway . . .
  Christ . . . Christ? But no man tells.

The thoughts of men are kings. They keep
  The crown, the sepulchre, the song.
The thoughts of men are kings. They sleep. . . .
  The thrones are empty overlong.

So rebel death a million-fold
  Of lamentable service takes.
The prophesying heart is cold. . . .
  Is cold . . . or breaks.

What now were best? Some little thing?
  To trim the dock-weed, cleanse the floor,
To die, to grieve on death, to bring
  The pitcher to the door?

Dig deep the grave, hew down the tree,
  Shatter the millstones, break the plough.
And was there once a Calvary?
  And thorns upon His brow?

NOCTURNE

O ROYAL night, under your stars that keep
  Their golden troops in charted motion set,
The living legions are renewed in sleep
  For bloodier battle yet.

O royal death, under your boundless sky
  Where unrecorded constellations throng,
Dispassionate those other legions lie,
  Invulnerably strong.

THE SHIPS OF GRIEF

On seas where every pilot fails
A thousand thousand ships to-day
Ride with a moaning in their sails,
Through winds grey and waters grey.

They are the ships of grief. They go
As fleets are derelict and driven,
Estranged from every port they know,
Scarce asking fortitude of heaven.

No, do not hail them. Let them ride
Lonely as they would lonely be . . .
There is an hour will prove the tide,
There is a sun will strike the sea.

THE POETS TO THE HEROES

Let us devise a music for to-day,
Solemn and sweet, worthy of solemn things,
For death now takes an unfrequented way.
Careless of age, his black and terrible wings
Fold upon youth; the full imaginings
Of midmost life are but a little clay.

Let sorrow sing the sorry forfeiture
Of life that sailed upon the central sky
Full-orbed in glad dominion, and secure
As life may be beneath mortality;
Let sorrow sing: the bitter laurels lie
On brows fore-darkened of death's signature.

Most heavy toll has death of all the rare
Bright bounty of the summertide of men,
The brain of spring is stricken unaware,
The flowing boughs are hewn. Make music then
Solemn and sweet, till death shall choose again
The winter tree and the grey-dusted hair.

Solemn, with notes that are not of the time
When plough nor scythe nor sickle is afield,
But chanted as remembering a prime
Cold in defeat, the rusting of a shield
Too soon put by, poor lips and vision sealed
When all the world was yet to see and rhyme.

Solemn, with sound of guns that make salute
Over a million graves untimely kept,
Solemn, with sound of tears that may dispute
No more with grief so long a day unwept,
Solemn, because the wiser angel slept,
Solemn, because the golden choirs were mute.

Yet sweet, for every nobleness is sweet,
Building above all bleak and envious power
Rigours and fames and chronicles to greet
The equal stars. And never fairer flower
Of nobleness was sprung than in this hour
When youth and death in tragic bridals meet.

Sweet, for the sacrifice that now is made,
Sweet, for the soul's victorious desire,
Sweet, for the hope whereof in price is paid
This ranging fury of destroying fire,
Sweet for the wings that beat above the pyre
Of happy men whose faith was unbetrayed.

The stars dispute not, and the primrose makes
Its bower unbidden underneath the thorn ;
Nor profits it, when the black angel wakes,
To rail on death with argument forlorn ;
Then surely to heroic song was born
This hour of earth that time so surely breaks.

Into your lonely silences you go
And death is your imperishable deed,
We bring you honour, and you shall not know,
We bring you music, and you shall not heed;
Yet is our song not measured by your need,
Being our sorrow's crown and overthrow.

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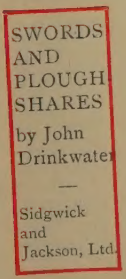
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